to protect against the winter's cold. At the time, I assumed myself to be an object of some curiosity among my fellow-privates, who, as I supposed, took me to be one of those poor creatures so domestically tied that I felt bound to write inter-minable letters home. When I got to know them better, it turned out that they were nearly all practising or *manque* writers them-selves, and knew only too well what I was up to. With the occupational envy of the trade, they hoped, I am sure, that my zealous efforts in such unpropitious circumstances would soon falter and come to nothing. They need not have worried. I scarcely wrote another word from then on till after the war's end.

It is one of the great illusions of war that, by participating in it, one will escape from the sort of life one has hitherto lived and the sort of companionship one has hitherto found. Not so. As the great process of sorting everyone out goes on, one neces-sarily soon finds oneself back in one's own milieu. An egghead came I into this world, and an egghead shall I depart thence. A chance conversation in the N.A.A.F.I with a burly lance-corporal who, in my eyes, bore every mark of authentic pro-letarian origins, would, sure as fete, soon get round to *The Waste Land* and Virginia Woolf. When I had been at Ash Vale for some months, and attained the acting local rank of C.S.M., I was instructed to meet an officer from the War Office at the local railway station, who was visiting us on some special mission* I pressed my uniform until it almost stood up of itself; I polished

my belt and the crown on my sleeve until they shone like the imorning sun; the toes of my boots, treated with a hot spoon, likewise gleamed. As the officer descended from a first-class rail-way carriage I gave him a salute clamorous enough to be heard a mile away. He nonchalantly returned it and we got into a waiting motor car; he at the back, and I in front beside the driver. As we drove along, I examined him in the driving-mirror, and seemed to find something familiar in his sensitive, intelligent, vaguely melancholy countenance. He was doing the same thing to me. The moment of recognition was mutual and